

ACTIA ROBINEAU-DESVOIDY, 1830 (INSECTA, DIPTERA):
REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION OF TYPE SPECIES. Z.N.(S.)2491

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Actia Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830, is a cosmopolitan genus belonging to the SIPHONINI with about 60 described species. The only valid type species designation for *Actia* makes it a senior objective synonym of *Elfia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1850. Current authors do not accept this type species designation because it was based upon a misconception of the species involved, and they continue to regard *Elfia* as a valid genus of moderate size in the NEAERINI (a tribe whose affinities to the SIPHONINI are unresolved). The unofficially accepted type species of *Actia*, *A. pilipennis* R.-D., 1830, is a junior secondary homonym of *Tachina pilipennis* Fallén, 1810; a valid *Actia* species. *Roeselia lamia* Meigen, 1838, has been recognised as a junior subjective synonym of *A. pilipennis* R.-D. since Robineau-Desvoidy's second treatment of *Actia* in 1850, and has been used as a replacement name for *A. pilipennis* R.-D. since at least the 1920s. This junior subjective synonym, *A. lamia* (Mg.), has no type, but syntypes survive of the junior secondary homonym, *A. pilipennis* R.-D. To fix the synonymy of *A. pilipennis* R.-D. and *A. lamia* (Mg.), a syntype of the former is designated below as lectotype of that species and neotype of *A. lamia*. The Commission is requested to suppress all type designations hitherto made for *Actia* R.-D. and to use its plenary powers to designate *Roeselia lamia* Mg. as type species, to preserve *Actia* and *Elfia* in their accepted usage. Details of the application follow.

2. In 1830 Robineau-Desvoidy described the new genus *Actia* and included in it new species *A. pilipennis* and *A. cingulata* (1830, pp. 85–86). Subsequently Robineau-Desvoidy removed *cingulata* and placed it in his new genus *Elfia* along with one new species (1850, pp. 190–191). A year later Robineau-Desvoidy revised *Actia* and added one new species to the already included *pilipennis* (1851, pp. 185–187). In his final (and posthumous) work Robineau-Desvoidy retained *Actia* and *Elfia* in the senses established in his 1850 and 1851 publications, and designated *cingulata* R.-D., 1830, as type species for the latter (1863, p. 672). Unfortunately, he did not similarly designate a type species for *Actia*.

3. Most authors of the late 1800s and early 1900s followed Robineau-Desvoidy's concept of *Actia*, but were uncertain about the identity and placement of *E. cingulata* (R.-D.). For example, *Elfia* was placed as a synonym of *Actia* in the catalogue by Bezzi & Stein (1907), with *cingulata* R.-D. questionably placed as a synonym of *Actia frontalis* (Macquart). (Bezzi & Stein did not explain why they replaced *pilipennis* R.-D. with *frontalis* Macq., 1845, rather than with the more senior synonym, *lamia* Mg., 1838. Later *lamia* Mg. became entrenched in the literature as the recognised replacement name for *pilipennis* R.-D.). Coquillett (1910, p. 503) may have relied upon Bezzi & Stein's catalogue when he mistakenly considered

cingulata R.-D. and *pilipennis* R.-D. synonyms and designated *cingulata* R.-D. as type species of *Actia*. In so doing Coquillett fixed *Elfia* as junior objective synonym of *Actia*.

4. Coquillett's type species designation in 1910 went unchallenged for many years because *cingulata* R.-D. was generally unrecognised. Mesnil (1954) attributes Stein (1924, p. 141) with first recognising the true identity of *cingulata* R.-D., though Stein's recognition was overlooked by many of his contemporaries. When the identity of *cingulata* R.-D. was eventually established, it became apparent that the species did not conform to the genus based upon *pilipennis* R.-D., as indeed recognised earlier by Robineau-Desvoidy in his works subsequent to 1830. Only two major revisionary works to my knowledge accepted Coquillett's type species designation once the distinction between *pilipennis* R.-D. and *cingulata* R.-D. became clear. These were Townsend's *Manual of Myiology* (1940, p. 189) and Mesnil's revision of African *Actia* and allies (1954). In the latter, Mesnil (1954, p. 5) followed Coquillett's designation in part because he misunderstood Robineau-Desvoidy's own explanation (1863, p. 672) about the tribal placements of *Actia* and *Elfia* (but see Mesnil's subsequent position in paragraph 7 below).

5. Rondani first treated the genus *Actia* briefly in 1856, keying the genus and adding below the generic epithet, '*Spec. Typ: (Nova) Vitripennis Mihi*' (1856, p. 60). A few years later Rondani (1859, pp. 18–19) fully described *Actia vitripennis*, clearly using the name as a replacement name for *Actia pilipennis* R.-D. because the latter is a junior secondary homonym of *A. pilipennis* (Fallén). Bezzi (1926, p. 238) considered the two publications by Rondani sufficient to fix *pilipennis* R.-D. as type species of *Actia*, and concluded that Coquillett's designation of *cingulata* was in error. Herting (1974, p. 19) similarly regarded Rondani's type designation as valid, even though he recognised that in 1856 *vitripennis* was a *nomen nudum* and that the name was not validated until Rondani's description of the species in 1859.

6. Contrary to the opinions of Bezzi and Herting in paragraph 5 above, Rondani's 1856 type designation cannot be accepted because it does not fulfill the necessary requirements of the Code. If Rondani had simultaneously described *vitripennis* as a replacement name for *pilipennis* R.-D. and designated it type species of *Actia*, then under Article 69a(iv) *pilipennis* R.-D. would automatically become the type species of *Actia*. Since Rondani's type designation was in 1856 and his species description in 1859, his designation is invalid.

7. At least two authors (Mesnil, 1963, p. 814 and van Emden, 1954, p. 63) have argued that *Actia* became monotypic when *cingulata* R.-D. was removed from it by Robineau-Desvoidy in 1850, and concluded that *pilipennis* R.-D. was fixed as type species of *Actia* from that time forth. However, there is no provision under the Code for acceptance of a type species designation by subsequent elimination of included species, so this interpretation by these authors must be rejected.

8. Despite attempts like those above to lend credence to the use of *pilipennis* R.-D. as type species of *Actia*, the evidence presented here indicates that the only valid type species designation was that of *cingulata* R.-D. by Coquillett in 1910. It is therefore necessary to suppress Coquillett's type species designation in order to preserve both *Actia* and *Elfia* in their current usage. That this interpretation is favoured by the majority of specialists is evident from the following list of recent works which employ both *Actia* and *Elfia* in the sense of Robineau-Desvoidy, and whose authors explicitly state that suspension of the I.C.Z.N. rules is required to validate this usage: Sabrosky & Arnaud (1965, p. 1061), Guimarães (1971, p. 164), Crosskey (1973, p. 136; 1976, p. 211; 1980, p. 852) and Andersen (1983, p. 12). Those who favour this interpretation also recognise *A. pilipennis* R.-D. as a junior secondary homonym of *A. pilipennis* (Fallén), and replace the name with *A. lamia* (Mg.). The type of *lamia* is lost, so its synonymy with *pilipennis* R.-D. is disputable unless action is taken to preserve it permanently. Below *pilipennis* R.-D. and *lamia* Mg. are made objective synonyms by designation of a neotype for *lamia* Mg. from among the syntypes of Robineau-Desvoidy's *A. pilipennis*. To further stabilize this synonymy, the specimen chosen as neotype of *lamia* Mg. is also designated lectotype of *A. pilipennis* R.-D. The Commission is requested to designate *Roeselia lamia* Meigen as type species of *Actia* rather than *Actia pilipennis* R.-D. to avoid possible confusion of the latter name with its senior homonym, *A. pilipennis* (Fallén).

9. If the Commission rules against this proposal, then the genus *Elfia* must be called *Actia*, and the old *Actia* must be renamed. Besides the nomenclatural objections to this raised above, one must also consider the effects a reapplication of the name *Actia* would have on host/parasite records. Published records would probably be frequently misinterpreted, and undated parasite records existing in collections or on unpublished lists as '*Actia* sp.' would become equivocal.

10. The syntype series of *Actia pilipennis* R.-D. is composed of 6 specimens: 5 males and 1 specimen lacking head and abdomen. They have been examined and one specimen has been chosen to serve as lectotype of *pilipennis* R.-D. and neotype of *lamia* Mg. The following information about the specimen is provided to satisfy the conditions of lectotype and neotype designations outlined in Articles 74 and 75 respectively: Male, length 4.4 mm, good condition though slightly mouldy, without labels (type-locality published as Saint-Sauveur, France), deposited in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (Paris). The specimen is consistent with the original descriptions of *Actia pilipennis* R.-D. (1830, p. 86) and *Roeselia lamia* Meigen (1838, p. 254). A label bearing the following information has been attached to this specimen: 'Lectotype of *Actia pilipennis* R.-D., Neotype of *Roeselia lamia* Mg., O'Hara designation, Selected 1984'. The species, under the name *Actia lamia*, is keyed and fully described by Mesnil (1963, pp. 814, 820).

11. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to set aside all designations of type species hitherto made for the nominal genus *Actia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830, and having done so to designate *Roeselia lamia* Meigen, 1838, as type species of that genus;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology:
 - (a) the generic name *Actia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830 (gender: feminine), type species *Roeselia lamia* Meigen, 1838, by designation under the plenary powers in (1) above;
 - (b) the generic name *Elfia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830 (gender: feminine), type species *Actia cingulata* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830, by designation of Robineau-Desvoidy, 1863, thereby removing *Elfia* from objective synonymy with *Actia* under the plenary powers of (1) above; and
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology:
 - (a) the species name *lamia* Meigen, 1838, as published in the binomen *Roeselia lamia* (specific name of type species of *Actia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830) and as defined by the neotype designated above;
 - (b) the species name *cingulata* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830, as published in the binomen *Actia cingulata* (specific name of type species of *Elfia* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1850).

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